



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
(by email)

29TH April 2019

Dear Ed Humpherson

RE: Presentation of official statistics on attendance/visitor numbers at National Portfolio Organisations /Major Partner Museums

Thank you for your timely letter on this matter. Arts Council England embraces the principles behind presenting data clearly, concisely and transparently to make it accessible to all interested parties. Our commitment to this is reflected in our published data principles, which can be found at <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/our-data-principles>. Whilst our key performance indicators have been agreed and set with DCMS, we are aware that how we report our data has an impact on people trying to understand the wealth of information we collect and publish every year.

Audience and visitor numbers are difficult to collate accurately, as you acknowledge in your letter. We strive to be as clear as we can when we spot anomalies, or where we've made decisions about outliers, but it is not possible for us to list those outliers in more detail without naming specific organisations. It is important to us that we protect the data we receive, so that individuals and the data we use are not identifiable.

Outliers are decided on an annual basis; one year an organisation might run a one-off event or be closed for refurbishment for example. This means that it is not always straightforward to compare data year on year, which we realise can cause issues around clarity. The constant sample is based on those NPOs who returned the relevant data in each of the 3 years we report on. This means that the cohort in this sample will change each year, making comparisons difficult.

We've been planning some changes to this release, and your letter gives us an opportunity to let others know about them. It is great to see confirmation that we are able to put more explanatory notes on the data, something we have wanted to do for some time - this clarity helps our planning. We are re-designing the topline tables we publish, along with the full report, to be one online, interactive table that we hope will streamline the process for people wanting to understand our sector data in more detail.

We recognise that we are operating in an increasingly data driven and data aware society, and as such the need to present and explain data clearly is of paramount importance.

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We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the statistics we produce and the presentation of these complex datasets, and so would be happy to meet with the General Statistical Services Good Practice Team.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Mowlah', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Mowlah
Director, Research
Arts Council England